THE SEED SOWER.

VOL. III.

EDITED BY

JOSEPH WOOD, & L. P. JACKS, M.A.

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The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

EDITORS: L. P. JACKS, M.A., AND JOSEPH WOOD.

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A Song of the Joy of Earth.

O tarry, Death, in realms obscure
And fetch me not away,
But prithee bid this breath endure
Beyond its destined day.

For gracious are the skies of Earth,
And all its winds are dear,
No hour but brings delight to birth
Throughout the changing year.

And tears and smiles, and shine and gloom
Revolve in human eyes—
Ah, time will never give me room
To grow severely wise,

And shake a palsied head, and sit
In grey exhaustion's chair,
Awaiting thy black wing to flit
Across the weary air,

And brush a ruin into dust!
But not before the wheels
Of all the ringing spheres are rust,
Not till God's breath congeals,

Nor while one hidden word remain
Within the voiceless night
In lingering travail to attain
Enlargement into light,

Would I, whom each new moment more
Enamours of the sun,
Come to thy dark embrace and pour
The harvests I have won.

Then, tarry, or if some behest
Constrain thy flight this way,
Oh, touch some tired and wintry breast
Instead, and let me stay.

AMBROSE BENNETT.

"Manchester College Pulpit."

Enduring Hardness:

A SERMON PREACHED AT MANCHESTER COLLEGE CHAPEL, OXFORD, ON JANUARY 6th, 1895.

BY REV. J. E. CARPENTER, M.A.

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—2 TIM. ii., 3.

This comes to us, first, as the counsel of an aged Apostle who has already fought the good fight, to the young disciple just taking his place in the ranks. But it has gathered up into itself a vast accumulation of Christian experience, and sounds now as the call of the Church to believers of every age and in every condition: nay, so completely has the Christian ideal established itself as one of the permanent factors of our social, moral, and religious development, that this high summons is generalised as the exhortation of Time to each succeeding generation, it is the farewell of the Old, and the greeting of the New Year.

Does it sound stern and cheerless as we count up the treasures which the Old Year has borne away? We think of the manifold variety of its incidents, of the wealth of its enjoyment, of the rich panorama of delight which memory can survey from day to day, and week to week, and month to month. We recall blessings of home in strong support of mutual love, blessings of

wedded sympathy and the joyous faces of the young. We remember riches of the field, the market, and the store. We live once again in the loveliness of the spring blossoms, and the full glory of the summer fruit. We enter our chambers of imagery, and gaze anew at the marvels of mountain and lake, of the forest and the sea. We behold autumn hang its banners of scarlet and gold upon the woods, and the harvest wealth lie piled in granary and barn. Beside memories of gifts and of beauty there rises the gladness of growing knowledge, of progress in learning or added skill in art, of difficulty mastered, and acquisition secured. Or recognition glows in gratitude for some service rendered, though it be ever so lowly, to high causes of truth and right; for minds that have opened to new ideas, or been touched with fresh sympathies, or quickened with more vital power. Or yet again, the whole past is lit for us with joy in the surprises of some new affection, and we walk in a glory that suffuses all our days. How shall we not give thanks to God when it is joy simply to live, and call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless His holy name!

And yet through all this rich variety of delight there runs a vein of hardness which none can wholly escape or ignore. That bodily life whose healthful course from day to day we often so thoughtlessly assume—though it is in truth a greater marvel moment by moment than any deliverance from sudden peril—is shot through with infirmity or streaked with pain. Physical weakness hangs its weight upon our limbs, or weariness lays its burden on our thought. The toil for daily bread is heavy, and the mind moves no more nimbly beneath its load of care. Some business difficulties, it may be, oppose a sudden obstacle to our advance. The course which we had marked out for ourselves is unexpectedly arrested; new burdens fall upon us unforeseen; and responsibilities which we had not sought impede our way. The memories of delight are darkened like a sunset by storm, when the serenity of the upper sky, or the pale peaceful primrose of the horizon, is overlaid by the cloud-wrack, whose mighty masses, torn and twisted, are hurled against each other by the winds and throw their sombre glooms upon the scene below What secrets does not the vanished year hold for some of us, of sudden loss or of continuous grief; what hidden knowledge also of personal failure in the surprises of trial, of long protracted wrestle with some perverse temper, some feebleness of will, which have marred our way and laid an irksome clog upon our steps, and perhaps shut up for us altogether some cherished vistas in the coming time.

What, then, after all, have we carried with us? Has all our comfort only left us more resolute to seek our own ease, or our pain made us more fretful and exacting? Has the abundance of our pleasure only tempted us to demand more? Or the severity of care stiffened us into an attitude of resistance and mistrust? It would be a poor result of all our happiness if we were less able to bear the shocks of circumstance which deprived us of it. It is a tragic issue when those who have emerged from the Valley of the Shadow tell us that the Lord was not with them, and they had no rod or staff to comfort them, because they had not realised that in their gladness He was at their side, and all their joy came through the inflowing of His constant love. We do well, therefore, to make ready for all possibilities in the coming time, and prepare ourselves to receive the counsel emphasized by the vanished year, "Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

When we turn, then, from the past to the future, does this exhortation throw a gloom over our hopes or mar the reality of our greetings? We have wished for each other, we have wished for our kindred and friends, brightness and welfare in the year that has now begun. If we had written these words across our cards should we have felt that we had destroyed their significance or impaired their sincerity? I do not think so. We might have struck a deeper note than common custom warrants; we might have awakened mirth among the thoughtless, or surprise among the comfortable and the secure. But we should not have been false to the deeper truth of life. If we repeat them to the young, for example, does their image loom vaguely before them like a dull shadow lowering over the prospect of beauty, love, and joy? Do they rob the sunshine of its glory, or the home of its peace, or the far-stretching prospect in the future of its infinite suggestiveness of delight? As-

surely not. But they are a warning that all powers, faculties, capacities, opportunities, come to us by way not of right but of trust; they are gifts of grace, not rewards of merit, and circumstance confers on us no title to complain if they are suddenly withdrawn from our grasp. Nor is that all. They have a further meaning; for the way of excellence can never be easy; we can never attain proficiency without effort, or skill without practice, or mastery in any sphere without strenuous toil. Ask the successful student whence comes his grasp of knowledge, his insight into history, his power to deal with nature; he will tell you that it is the result of years of unremitting work, in which each step must be established before advance was possible. Ask the draughtsman for the secret of his line, the painter for the mystery of his colouring, the musician for the charm of his touch; they will confess they are no heaven-conferred endowment, they are the product of assiduous culture; they have not descended out of the infinite upon folded hands; they have been won, in virtue indeed of the primal bounty of nature, with ceaseless persistence and struggle unrelaxed. These men, too, have had their seasons of disappointment; for them sometimes expectation has been frustrated and achievement spoiled just on the verge of its completeness; but the vision of truth or beauty has led them steadily on. As the world opened for them, they have seen a richer glory in its myriad hues and caught a deeper harmony amid its dissonant cries. And the endurance of hardness has not only been the needful preliminary, the indispensable condition of a final joy, it has been joy itself in the making, joy in the slow increase of power, joy in the exercise of energy, joy in the consciousness of progress, joy in the enlargement of hope, joy in advance towards attainment; so that even those who are bruised with defeat and chastened with failure may still say "Though we aimed high and were not counted worthy of the highest, we have still the blessedness that we have seen it, and have striven humbly in the noblest service."

In our maturer experience, perhaps, we are more conscious of the difficulty, and less of the satisfaction in overcoming it. There are cases which beset us individually, in our own personal self-discipline: there are anxieties arising in the larger life which we share with the community around us: and the summons to endure hardness does not so obviously bring with it its own justification, or fulfil so rapidly the promise which it implicitly contains. We are sometimes discouraged at our slow progress in Christian grace. Our characters seem to have become set and our tempers stiff. We have come to terms with some fault which we cannot master. We have grown accustomed to some restlessness which we cannot tame to peace. We have settled down under some grief which will never cease to numb our faculties and crush our hopes. We have fitted our back to some burden, and we do not purpose to try to fling it off, but we do not pretend that it is pleasant: we say to ourselves roughly that we will have no illusions in the matter; we will know the worst and face it; but we do not see that it can be in any way a minister to our welfare, it is as much as can be expected of us if we accept the inevitable without complaint. In such a temper we are sure to look with impatience at the larger struggle in the world about us. We resent its difficulties, and desire to escape our share in solving them. We shrink from the intellectual labour needful for clear and reasoned views. We are unwilling to face issues which require arduous thought. We acquiesce—this is one form of evasion—in experiments of which we do not approve, in the vague hope that something will turn up; or we play with ideas and suggest remedies to which future generations may give effect, taking an immoral comfort from the thought that these changes will not arrive in our day; possession is for the present, sacrifice for the future; let those who come after us be prepared for the great upheaval. Society may justly ask of the unborn renunciations which it should not expect of the living: let us throw the hardness upon them, and keep the privilege and ease for ourselves.

If any of us have been conscious during the past year of this mood, or feel, as we look forward to the coming year, that it lies even unacknowledged in the background of our hearts, we should do well to take earnestly to heart the significance of the great word of the Apostle, "Endure hardness *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" There is the symbol of our warfare, a warfare in which we are no more alone, but realise our relation to God and man. The principle of all

service is the surrendered will. Of that surrender Jesus has become to us the supreme example, and the great fight with evil alike within us and without is waged by his principles, and under his name. And the essence of the whole matter is, as Tolstoi has just said, in the remarkable letter addressed only last Christmas Day to his critics, that "the sense of life as shown by the Christian religion consists in living so as to do the will of Him who sent us into life, from whom we are come, and to whom we shall return; the evil of our life consists in acting against that will, and the good in fulfilling it." And for each one of us personally the will of God is to be found first in the conditions of our own being; in the gifts and endowments entrusted to each one of us; in the opportunities of individual progress or of general service daily set before us; in the restraints laid upon us as well as in the energies imparted to us, in the limitations of insight and faculty, as well as in the affections that invite us, the ideals that claim us, the summons to duty and to love that sounds unchangeably for ever in our souls. To learn to recognise this call at any moment amid the multitudinous voices of the world, to obey it with alacrity, to fulfil it with joy, is the first demand of the Christian service. And to that end, Jesus stands before us foremost in the mighty band who, early and late, in elder and in younger time, have trod the way of renunciation without fear, have borne privation, have wrestled with difficulty, have encountered tribulation, and *have overcome*.

Nor is this all. The matter does not concern only our solitary allegiance to the will of God as we discern it in the immediate conditions of our several careers. The soldier is no single champion of a personal cause. He does not march or fight alone: he advances in line, he belongs to a company, each regiment has its place in the field, so that every private has his share in the victory, his part in the triumph of the whole campaign. And hence it is that every failure, every unfaithfulness reaches beyond the limits of our special lot. To right and left of us, in front and rear, are our comrades, the veterans of a hundred battles, and the young conscript who sees the real warfare for the first time. Remember, then, that you carry the welfare of others along with your own; the cause of the whole is committed to each, he bears in part a responsibility for all. Are you weary in your service? Bethink you of the faltering brother who leans upon your strength. Are you tempted to be discontented or mutinous? Know that the timid take courage because you are there. Do you seek an opportunity to drop out of the ranks? Forbear, and hold your ground, for among the loiterers panic spreads with fatal speed.

Vicissitude, indeed, there must be in this service. We cannot always live at our highest tension, for however willing the spirit may be the flesh cannot always answer its demands. Moreover, there are seasons when the out-come seems for a time obscured, when the tissue of circumstance is so tangled that we cannot always clearly see our way, and we look back almost with envy to the heroes of a past generation for whom the call rang clear and unmistakable. In the Memorial Hall attached to Harvard University, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a noble transept, built to commemorate the former students who gave their lives in the great war for the maintenance of the Union and the liberation of the slave. No one could survey without emotion the tablets containing the lists of those who fell upon the field, or died of wounds and fever in the grim anguish of camp hospitals; no one could fail to notice how the constant recurrence of the same well-known names showed that whole families had offered up the best of their young men. So deep was the moral impression of that contest, so keen the longing for some direct appeal with simple issue and imperative command, that more than one observer, lamenting the present chaos of political and social strife, said to me in different places, "Almost could we desire another war, to purify the air, and unite us in common duty." As I crossed the ocean, and day by day gazed at the sunshine on the heaving sea, I read a volume of biographies of the heroes of the Italian movement, put into my hands by one of the most distinguished scholars of America, recounting the sorrows and sufferings of the men who in the same decade at last made Italy one. "I am an old man," he said, he was over seventy, "And whenever I feel tempted to despond of human nature, I turn to lives like these, and I find faith revived."

Such men had a great symbol, the unity of their country; they could endure hardness as good soldiers of freedom and right. The kingdom of God is a wider cause than that of country or of race. It is the cause of liberty and truth, of justice and love, all the world over, and all ages through. Its loftiest prophets must needs be rare, its highest seers are few. But it is the cause of liberty and truth, of justice and love, in the least things as in the greatest, and so it is a cause in which we can all serve, for which we can all sacrifice something, and which we can all at least help to maintain, till its fresh social forms shall become clear. For they who have borne hardness under such captains of their salvation know that their endurance has not been in vain. In fighting the good fight some may have failed and some have fallen; but they realise slowly that God is on their side, and that the victory in the end is sure. Such helpers we in our little company have known. Some of them have been caught away from us by the vanished year. But we remember what they did for us; they have bequeathed to us their indomitable faith.

"Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine.
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return;
Eyes rekindled, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue the march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God!"

The stars are steady above;
I' the water they flichter an' flee;
But steady aye luikin' doon,
They ken themsel's i' the sea.

All licht, an' clear, an' free,
God, thou shinest above,
Yet luik, an' see thysel' in me,
God, when thou luikest doon.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

On Borrowing.

It is extraordinary what a way some people have of borrowing! It is not a practice I am fond of myself, but it has certainly one point in its favour, for it is most economical.

I have been asked at various times to lend umbrellas, travelling trunks, and several other things, which do not improve by wear, and have had them returned to me sometimes after a lapse of weeks, without a word of apology for keeping them so long, and occasionally very much battered and knocked about.

Of course, it is very weak to allow myself to be so imposed on, but I cannot bear to seem unneighbourly, and it really is a pleasure to do a kindness if it lies in my power, so that, in spite of all my experience as to the folly of lending, I never can steel my heart against a certain friend of mine. Every year when the jam-making season comes round, she borrows my preserving pan, though, as she has now done so for over a dozen years, I quite agree with her when she politely remarks that "It is a shame to do so again." Well, I commend her economy, both then and at other times, as, for instance, when she gives a party, she invariably begs for the loan of all my superfluous plate and glass, and so saves herself the expense of buying or hiring. This lady sometimes reminds me in her borrowings of the thrifty housewife who started a poultry farm on the borrowing system. She began by begging the loan of a dozen eggs from one neighbour, and then secured the loan of a hen to sit on them from another. After a time the chickens were hatched, but the hen was kept not only to look after them, but also till she had laid sufficient eggs to pay back those which had been borrowed.

"Well, Father Brown, how did you like my sermon yesterday?" asked a young preacher. "Ye see, parson," was the reply, "I haven't a fair chance at them sermons of yourn. I'm an old man now, and have to set putty well back by the stove; and there's old Miss Smith, n' Widder Taff, n' Mrs. Rylan's darters, and Nabby Birt, n' all the rest, setting in front of me, with their mouths wide open, a swallering down all the best of the sermon; n' what gets down to me is putty poor stuff, parson, putty poor stuff.

Historic Notes on Midland Churches.

No. XI.—PART I.

BEWDLEY—HIGH STREET CHAPEL.

Ministers.

(LIST POSSIBLY IMPERFECT).

Henry Oasland, M.A.	-1703
Edward Oasland	1704-1750
Job Barret	about 1725-1739
John Reynolds	about 1745-49
John Adams	1750-1773
John Jones	1768-1824
Evan Jones	1824-1858
Edward Parry	1858-Nov., 1867
Abraham Lunn ...	29 Dec., 1870-Nov., 1872

On 10 February, 1700, a deed was executed between Joseph Tyndall, of Bewdley, mercer, and John Allen, of Bewdley, apothecary, on the one part, and Jabez Reynoulds, shoemaker, John Dovey, glover, Joseph Carter, Edward Perkins, Arthur Perkins, Arthur Radnor, all shoemakers, of Bewdley, Thomas ffaulkner, of Bewdley, combmaker, and James Thomson, of Ribbenhill, ropier, on the other part. By this deed Tyndall and Allen convey to the others "one piece or parcel of ground, containing 24 yards in length, and 14 yards in breadth, in Upper Street, Bewdley," which ground Tyndall had bought from one "John Willis, of Bewdley, skinner and malster," and on which Tyndall had "by and with moneys raised by a publick collection of and from several persons erected or built" *(probably in 1696)* "an house which is now used for a meeting house for religious worship." The witnesses to the signatures were Henry Toye, Edward Osland *(sic.)*, Obadiah Clare and Edward Toye. In the Rev. James Scott's MSS. he says that "the certificate appointing Henry Oasland minister of Bewdley during the Commonwealth is still extant." Amongst this chapel's trust deeds and other papers, which I saw in the office of Mr. W. H. Talbot, solicitor, at Kidderminster, on 29 January, 1895, was the original parchment "testimonial" of Henry Oasland's ordination in the "Church of Bartholomew Exchange, in London," on 5 August, 1651, in which, as Calamy tells us, "the words relating to the taking the covenant were rased out, as he had not taken it, nor was it then insisted on as formerly." The time-stained parchment runs thus:—

"FORASMUCH as Mr. Henry Osland, Batchelor of Arts, hath addressed himself to the Classical Presbyterie, within the Province of Loudon (According to the Ordinance of both Houses of Parliament, of Aug. 28, 1646, for the Ordination of Ministers by the Classical Presbyters) desiring to bee Ordained a Preaching Presbyter, for that hee is called to the work of the Ministerie in the town of Bewdley, in the County of Worcester. And hath exhibited unto the Presbyterie sufficient Testimonial (now remaining in their custodie) of his competent Age, of his umblameable life and Conversation, of his diligence and proficiencie in his Studies, *of his taking the solemn covenant of the three Kingdoms* (these words are rased out) and of his fair and direct calling unto the fore-mentioned place.

WEE, the Ministers of the said Presbyterie, have (by appointment thereof) Examined him according to the tenor of the said Ordinance; and findeing him to bee duly qualified and gifted for that holie Office and imploiment (no just exemption beeing made against his Ordination or Admission) wee have approved him: And accordingly in the Church of Bartholomew Exchange, in London, upon the daie and year hereafter expressed wee have proceeded Solemnly to set him apart to the Office of a preaching Presbyter and work of the Ministrie with Fasting, Praier, and Imposition of Hands. And do hereby so far as concerneth us actually Admit him unto the said charge there to perform all the offices and duties of a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ. IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names this fifth daie of August, Anno Dom., 1651.

S. A. CLARKE. SIMSON ASHE.
F. A. CRANFORD.
WM. TAYLOR. F. G. FULLER.

Henry Oasland, M.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge, was born in the parish of Rock, and educated under the curate of the parish, and at the Free School at Bewdley. After spending four years in the University, Calamy tells us, Oasland "went to see his friends, intending to return and pursue his studies. But the famous Mr. Tombs, after his dispute with Mr. Baxter, in Bewdley Chapel, leaving the town, the

magistrates prevailed with Mr. Oasland to succeed him in 1650." . . . . "He was the legal minister of Bewdley, from whence he was unwilling to remove, though he had considerable offers, because there were so many excellent Christians in the town. He continued his public labours here till August, 24, 1662, having both here and in the towns adjacent, surprising success." . . . "When he was ejected he and his family (in which were five children), were supported only by a jointure his wife had from her former husband, but he was contented and easy." . . . . "After the Toleration he preached twice every Lord's day, and several lectures some miles from home, which he continued till Lord's day, October 3, 1703, when he was so ill that he could not preach, and on the 19th he died, aged about 80. The public minister preached a funeral sermon at his interment, on Rev. xiv. 13." . . . James Scott tells us that Oasland's memory was so respected, that twelve funeral sermons were preached for him. He was buried in the chancel of Kingswinford, and left two sons amongst the Nonconformists. Edward, the elder, was pastor at Bewdley, "where he had for some time assisted his father," (Scott) and Henry, the younger, who died in Cambridgeshire.

Edward Oasland, according to Watler Wilson, was educated by John Woodhouse, "one of the ministers silenced in Nottinghamshire," who "kept his academy at Sherifnales, in Shropshire, where, says Job Orton, "he was an eminent tutor and educated many excellent divines and several gentlemen of the most considerable families in these parts: as Foley, Hartley, Hunt, &c." In Dr. Evans's lists (1714-29) we find the number of hearers given in Bewdley as 300, ministers "Edward Oasland, Job Barret." Walter Wilson tells us that Edward Oasland (who died 1750) had a MS. memorandum book, containing an account of the building of the original place of worship by Tyndall. This book is not amongst the trustee's papers, nor can I find it in the present chapel, which was built during the long ministry of Rev. John Jones.

John Adams was ordained on 18 July, 1751, Dr. Doddridge taking part in the service.

John Jones was a Daventry student, being admitted in 1763; and from 1764 to 1765 was on the foundation of the Presbyterian Board at Daventry. He "subscribed to Orton, 1788, and died in May, 1824, aged 80, having been 56 years pastor to this society, 1768-1824" (Wilson). The following document signed by "John Jones, Protestant Dissenting Minister, of Bewdley," is preserved amongst the chapel papers. "Be it known to all whom it may concern, that the late Mr. Reynolds left by will twenty shillings to be equally divided between the Rector of Ribbesford, and the Protestant Dissenting Minister, of Bewdley, yearly for ever, that is to say ten shillings each yearly, to be laid out in purchasing Bibles for the poor. The same twenty shillings to be paid yearly by the proprietor of the house known as the Swan Inn, in Bewdley, in Easter week of each year."

GEORGE EYRE EVANS,
Dodington Parsonage,
Whitchurch, in Salop.

(To be concluded next month.)

A Blade of Grass.

If you could tell me, little blade of grass,
How God has fed you in this barren mould,
And made your life a joy to all that pass,
I'd wiser be than wisest men of old.

Content to grow in this old hovel's shade,
Where wearing toil and pinching hunger are;
And yet He paints with equal care your blade
And tones the sparkle of the farthest star.

If you could tell me why He chose this place
For you to cheer His poor with vernal green,
I'd fathom more of spiritual grace
Then sainted Fénelon or Augustine.

Sometimes I question, in the dark of doubt,
What is the link between your life and mine,
Assured, if I could find *your* being out,
I'd fathom all His infinite design.

Here for a little space on you I tread,
Then in a little while o'er me you creep,
As if to say, "Hush, child, your doubt and dread!
Leave all the rest to God, and go to sleep."

M. C. PECKHAM.

Bad temper bites at both ends; it makes one's-self nearly as miserable as it does other people.

Sleeping in Church.

It may not be known to many of our readers that for more than three centuries the duty of awaking sleeping members of congregations was discharged by regularly appointed officials in various parts of England, and to a more limited extent in America.

The sluggard-waker was known at Warrington as the "bobber." A very masculine kind of woman, named Betty Finch, occupied this position at Holy Trinity Church in 1810. She is said to have walked majestically along the aisles during the service, armed with a long stick like a fishing-rod, which had a "bob" fastened to the end of it. When she detected any one either sleeping or talking, she gave them a "nudge" with her official implement. Her son used to sing :

My father's a clerk ;
My sister's a singer ;
My mother's the bobber ;
And I am a ringer.

Truly, an official, if not an officious family.

Between thirty and forty years ago, one of the churchwardens or apparitors of Acton church, in Cheshire, used to go round the church during divine service with a long wand in his hand ; and if any of the congregation were asleep, they were instantly awoke by a tap on the head with this staff of office. A similar usage existed at Dunchurch. A person bearing a stout wand, shaped like a hayfork at the end, stepped stealthily up and down the nave and aisle, and whenever he saw an individual asleep, he touched him so effectually that the spell was broken—this being sometimes done by fitting the fork to the nape of the neck. A writer states that on one occasion he watched as the sluggard-waker mounted with easy steps into the galleries of that church. At the end of one of them there sat in the front seat a young man who had much the appearance of a farmer, with his mouth open, and his eyes closed—a perfect picture of repose. The official marked him as his own ; and having fitted his fork to the nape of the sleeper's neck, he gave him such a push that, had he not been used to such visitations, he would probably have produced an ejaculation highly inconvenient on such an occasion. But no ; all seemed quietly to acquiesce in the usage ; and whatever else they might be dreaming of, they certainly did not dream of any infringement upon the liberties of the subject ; nor did they think of applying for a summons on account of the assault.

A beadle in another church is described as going round the sa red edifice during service time carrying a long staff, at one end of which was a fox's brush, and at the other a knob. With the former he gently tickled the faces of the female sleepers ; whilst on the heads of their male compeers he bestowed with the knob a smart knock, which roused them to a sense of their position.

The practice of intrusting to a beadle or some other official the duty of awakening sleeping member of a congregation, seems to have prevailed in America more than two centuries ago. In 1646, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Whiting was minister of Lynn, Massachusetts. One Obadiah Turner kept a journal at that time, from which we give the following amusing extract :—"1646, June the 3d. Allen Brydges hath bin chose to wake the sleepers in meeting, and being much proud of his place, must need have a fox taile fixed to the end of a long staff, wherewith he may brush the face of them that will have naps in time of discourse ; likewise a sharp thorne, wherewith he may prick such as be moste sounde. On the laste Lord his day, as he strutted about the meeting-house, he did spy Mr. Tomkins sleeping with much comforte, his head kept steadie by being in the corner, and his hand grasping the rail. And soe spying Allen did quicklie thrust his staff behind Dame Ballard, to give him a grievous prick upon the hand. Whereupon Mr. Tomkins did spring up much above the floor, and with terrible force strike his hand against the wall, and also, to the great wonder of all, prophainlie exclaim in a loud voice : 'Buss the woodchuck!' he dreaming, as it seemed, that a woodchuck had seized and bit his hand. But on coming to know where he was, and the great scandall he had committed, he seemed much abashed, but did not speak. And I think he will not soone againe go to sleepe in meeting. The women may sometimes sleep and none know it, by reason of their enormous bonnets. Mr. Whiting does pleasantly say that from the pulpit, he does seem to be preaching to stacks of straw, with men jotting here and there among them."

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Beetle's Diamond Coat.

Once upon a time there lived a beetle under the tall hedgerow of a pleasant country lane. It ought to have thought itself very lucky to have so fine a home and to be perfectly sound in health and limbs. But instead of this, it was always sour and discontented.

"What ails you?" asked the Spirit that looks after the beetles.

"I don't like my coat," was the complaining answer. "I want another."

Now there was not the least reason for the beetle being dissatisfied with his coat. It fitted beautifully, not a wrinkle or crease in it; and the colours on it, though not very gay were most artistic. But it appeared that the beetle wished for a coat of gayer colours; especially he wanted a grass green collar and red spots on the lappets.

The Guardian Spirit of the beetles spoke again: "I wish you to be contented, so if you strongly desire to have a brighter coat you shall have it. But pray don't forget that there is danger in changing coats. The enemies of beetles, against whom your hard coat is a protection, are always flying about on the watch, and if one of them catches you between times when you have the old coat off and are not in the new one, you will be at his mercy."

But no talking availed. The beetle's mind was wholly bent on having the new and gayer coat. So it was brought, and placed ready for his getting into. As he had just struggled out of the old coat he heard the rush of wings overhead, and it was only by using the greatest activity that he just slipped into the new coat. He was silent for a minute, panting for fear; but very soon he forgot the narrowness of the escape, conceitedly saying to himself, "I managed that very well, with lots of time to spare. It was nonsense the Spirit making so much to-do about danger."

Very few days passed before the beetle began to dislike his present coat. For one thing, it did not fit him nearly as well; it held him too tightly in some places, and was too big in others. Then he overheard some of his neighbours, on whose admiration he had been reckoning, say, "How awkward he looks in that coat! It never was meant for him!"

The Spirit noticed his moping. "What, not contented yet? Is there anything more you wish for?"

"I should be happy if I had a copper coat," replied the beetle.

"Remember the danger!" said the Spirit in a warning voice.

The beetle would not listen. But the peril proved this time to be not a fancied one merely. As the beetle was changing coats, again came the rush of wings, and a hard beak closed on one hind leg before he could get wholly into the copper garment. One of his limbs was gone for ever! The beetle much regretted his folly while the pain lasted; but when the wound healed he tried to hide his loss by swaggering about in the grand copper coat. For a little he dazzled some of his neighbours; but so soon as their eyes got used to its glitter he overheard them pointing out to one another that he had lost a leg in getting the second new coat. Every one of them agreed that it was not worth it; and this made him more discontented than ever.

"I must have a coat of silver," he said to the Spirit.

"Take care," was the answer. "You have had one sharp lesson."

He very quickly had another. For, though he tried to be quick in changing coats, he was not quick enough. Either the same bird or another snapped off a second leg. It is true that he now had very sparkling attire, but the wearing of it was spoiled in the eyes of others by his having to limp and drag. The beetle spectators, so soon as he turned his back, laughed at him, and he heard them

"Help me, Spirit," he discontentedly cried. "There is nothing for it now but to silence them by my magnificence. Give me a gold coat."

"Cannot you see that this discontent has led you steadily on from bad to worse?" asked the Spirit. "If you do not check it, a worse disaster is before you."

It was of no avail. The beetle would have the coat of gold; and when he got it, besides having been again sorely bitten and torn in changing, he found the coat so heavy that he scarcely could bear it. It was inconvenient in every way, and he again heard the other beetles talking all around of him. They said the grander his coats had grown the meaner, more maimed, uglier, and more wretched he who wore them had become. He felt that this was true. "Why look at him," some derisively muttered, "he scarcely has a leg left, and he is scarred all over."

"I insist, Spirit," was the wretched beetle's last prayer, "that I have a diamond coat."

It was his very last request, for the worst disaster of all, which the Spirit had warned him of, now overtook him. As he was crawling out of the gold coat into the diamond one, the air above him grew dark with the shadow of wings, and he was snapped up, naked and defenceless, by a devouring beak, which had long been waiting for him.

A schoolmaster was one day instructing his class in a scientific subject, when, wishing to simplify the explanation of a certain point by an every-day illustration, he asked, "Have any of you boys ever stirred up a wasp's nest?" "Yes, sir; I have," promptly answered one of the smaller boys. "Well," said the master, encouragingly, thinking to draw out the boy's intelligence' "what was the result?" "Please, sir, I didn't wait to see," answered the boy.

The Parables of Jesus.

LESSON-NOTES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

IX.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

[Read Luke x., 25-37. Learn Gal. v., 14.]

INTRODUCTORY.—This parable sets forth the boundlessness of love; its only limit is opportunity. The early notion was that you were to love your family, friends, and countrymen, but no more. The Jews were one of the exclusive races. The idea that men and women should love one another just because of their common humanity did not then exist. Race prejudices everywhere prevailed. Greeks and Romans used to call all the rest of the world "barbarians," as the Chinese do to-day. Even Plato commended the Athenians because they had "a pure and heartfelt hatred to the foreign nature." There was little or no sense of obligation to anybody outside the family or tribe. They fought one another, conquered one another, killed one another, sold one another into slavery, and only little by little found out that all men are brethren—that the little Indian or Negro and Egyptian children were as dear to their fathers and mothers as Jewish or Greek or Roman children could be to them. (See Paul—Acts xvii., 26-28). Lesson not yet learned. How many a boy looks down on Frenchman or German, or Japanese, and thinks, as a matter of course, that an Englishman must be worth a good half-dozen of any of them. How long it takes to learn that other races and peoples have equal rights with our own. Still longer does it take to master the pride and prejudice of race and to love men just because they are men.

EXPLANATORY.—V. 25. "*Certain lawyer*"—must not think of an English lawyer. A "lawyer" among the Jews was one learned in the Mosaic Law which he taught in the schools and synagogues. "*Tempted Him.*" Tested him; made trial of his wisdom. To tempt is not necessarily evil—it is to "try"—put to the proof.

V. 26.—Observe Christ's favourite method of answering one question by asking another.

V. 27.—(See Deut. vi., 5, with Lev. xix., 18). The lawyer shows himself not unworthy. He lays his finger at once on the divinest thing in the Old Testament.

V. 28.—"*Who is my neighbour?*" The Jews had hitherto limited the word *neighbour* by race and creed. The point of the parable is its extension beyond race and creed.

V. 30.—Jericho was about 19 miles East of Jerusalem. The "*thieves*" were highway robbers. This was a lonely road and infested by banditti. At one place it was called the Red or Bloody Way, from the blood which had been shed there. Later on, a fort was erected on the road by the Romans for the protection of travellers. (See Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," ch: xiii.)

V. 31-2—"*Priest—and Levite.*" Jericho was the residence of a large number of Priests and Levites, who would therefore pass along this road in going to and from their duties at the Temple.

V. 33.—"*A certain Samaritan.*" The word "*Samaritan*" is emphatic. Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with each other (John iv. 9.) Intense race hatred between them. The Jews cursed the Samaritan publicly in the Synagogue—poclaimed that his testimony was worthless—and he who entertained a Samaritan was laying up judgments for his children—that to eat a morsel of his food was as eating swine's flesh—that he was an idolater. The Samaritan in like manner cursed the Jew. But here was a Samaritan *kind* to a Jew. Wonderful sight!

V. 34.—"*Oil and Wine.*" Remedies common and much esteemed in the East. Traveller carried a gourd of oil, in order to anoint himself and prevent skin from blistering under hot sun. He carried it also to cure any wound. (Mark vi.. 13. Isaiah i., 6).

V. 35.—"Two pence." Roman denarii, worth about 1s. 5d. of our money. The sum was not large, but probably the Samaritan was only going to Jerusalem and expected to return in a day or two.

V. 36.—Jesus makes the lawyer himself answer his own question.

LESSON.—The lesson is plain, simple and beautiful—the universality of love. There are some whom it is easy to love—father, mother, brother, sisters, friends who have been kind. But to love our neighbour is wider. Our neighbour is the one who is *near* to us—anyone we can help. In these days many people reverse the old fault of narrowness—they are concerned about men who are far away and indifferent about the men who are near. Anxious for the good of the Negro, the Hindoo, and the savage, while they have no thought for the savages in their own land. Charity must begin at home—with my neighbour—the man nearest to me, whoever he is—the cabman who drives me, the man who blacks my boots, who prints my book, who bakes my bread, who begs from me in the street, who sweeps the crossing—yes, even the man who condescends to me. With each and all there is the chance of doing the part of a neighbour, if in no other way yet by speaking truly, acting justly, and thinking kindly. Begin at home—with the beggar on the doorstep! Tell the story of Lowell's "Sir Launfal," who went *abroad* to serve Christ in far lands, heeding not the beggar at his gate—and who came back weary, disappointed, to find the beggar in the same place. Now having learned humility and humanity, he shared with him the little he had left and found in the beggar the very Lord himself.

> And a voice that was calmer than silence said,
> "Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
> In many climes, without avail,
> Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail,
> Behold it is here,—this cup which thou
> Did'st fill at the streamlet for me but now;
> This crust is my body broken for thee,
> This water His blood that died on the tree;
> The Holy Supper is kept indeed
> In what we *share* with another's need;
> Not what we give but what we share,
> For the gift without the giver is bare;
> Who gives himself, with his alms feeds three—
> Himself, his hungering neighbour, and me."

X.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

[Read Matthew xxv., 1-13. See also Luke xii., 35-40.]

INTRODUCTORY.—One of the most vivid of the Parables. Picture the wedding — the rejoicing — the home-coming of the Bride and Bridegroom—the band of virgins with their lamps and torches—the dismay of some to find their oil does not hold out—their effort to beg of their companions—their rushing off at full speed to buy more—their coming back when it is too late to go into the feast, for the Wedding procession has swept into the house and *the door is shut.* But no parable more misunderstood. There have been many fanciful interpretations, arising out of the habit of pressing its details and drapery instead of keeping in view its fundamental thought. The number ten, the lamp, the oil, the wicks, the oil vessels, the difference between *slumbered* and *slept*, have all been thought to have deep and profound meanings. But there is one main idea—lost opportunities—and the idea centres in the metaphor of the *door*. The metaphor of a closed and an open door belongs to all climes and times, belongs to no one age, or people, or literature, but to the human family. A metaphor always intelligible, always popular. We read of "a door of hope" (Hosea ii., 15); of "a door of faith" (Acts xiv., 27); "a door of utterance"—an opportunity, that is, of preaching the Gospel (Col. iv., 3.) The way into the human soul is by a door (Rev. iii., 20.) Jesus himself is a door (John x., 9)—a way into a better life. Now doors are not always open—opportunities pass away, and *the door is shut.*

EXPLANATORY.—V. 1. "*Took their lamps.*" Eastern marriages were, and still are, celebrated at night. Hence the need of lamps. The bride and bridegroom would be met near their new home by rejoicing friends.

V. 2.—"*Wise*" and "*foolish*,"—prudent and thoughtless. Not divided into good and bad, but into thoughtful and careless.

V. 4.—"*Oil in their vessels.*" The oil in the lamps would want replenishing—hence it was necessary to carry a fresh supply in a little gourd or bottle.

V. 8.—"*Are gone out*"—more correctly, are going out. They saw the flame flickering and diminishing.

V. 10.—"*To the marriage*"—to the marriage feast in the bridegroom's house.

V. 13.—"*Wherein the Son of Man cometh.*" These words are not in the original and have been omitted from the R.V.

LESSON:—THE CLOSE OF OPPORTUNITY.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries;
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures.

Opportunities come to us all, opportunities of learning, of gaining skill, of making friendships, of playing a brave part, of doing good, of showing kindness, which once missed never return. Other opportunities may be given us, but those that are gone, are gone for ever. Not one will come back. They were all doors standing open for us to enter, and now the doors are shut.

1. What an opportunity is School. Children chafe at its duties and confinement and exaction, its regular hours, its obedience to teachers When the weather is bright and their spirits are high they would like to be in the open air enjoying themselves. They do not value this opportunity of cultivating their minds. Now is their time for learning—by and by when the work of life comes upon them they will have no chance. And then they wish that they could have their time over again—that precious time of the first years of life when they thought only of the playground and the holiday. Many a man has said, "How I wish I could go to school again, with my present sense of its value." But *the door is shut!*

2. What an opportunity is Home—an opportunity for service, of love, of self-denial, of learning patience and shewing kindness. Every day some door stands open—some way of making mother happy, of giving pleasure to father. And how many a woman in after life says, "Oh! if I had my time over again I would not make my mother's heart ache as once I did." Ah! there is no sorrow like that of remembering the kind words we might have spoken, the loving deeds we might have done, and *forgot*. We would do them now if we could, but how can we go back into childhood's home to make amends? The *door is shut!*

3. What opportunities are Life and Time. Life itself is a School—a College—an Art. The opportunity of achieving great character, of acquiring deep wisdom, of producing a harvest of golden deeds. Time—our span of years, short or long—is ours to fill with treasure. Every minute is like a golden coin, to waste or use. And once gone it will never come back. Other time may be given us—but the time we have wasted we have wasted for ever, and for ever we shall be the poorer for that waste. Lost opportunities are for ever lost. This is not to say, that a man has no other opportunity if he loses this. What opportunities God may have for us in other worlds we know not, although we hope much. But these will not undo the past or bring back the opportunities neglected. On these *the door is shut!*

THE TALENTS.

[Read Matt. xxv., 14-30. Learn 1 Peter iv., 10.]

INTRODUCTORY.—Direct attention to two words in v. 15, "talents," "ability." Often hear of a talented man. What do we mean by talented? Not simply clever, but having a special gift for a special thing. Street Arabs are "clever," sharp, shrewd, know how to take care of themselves, and avoid carriage wheels and dodge the policeman. But cleverness — general sharpness — not talent. A talented man is a man who has a special turn for doing something. We say, A has a talent for Music, B for Language, C for History, D for Engineering, E for Mathematics, &c. How have we got to use the word talent in this way? The word used thus is itself a parable. A Greek word which meant at first—not gift, or power, or ability, but simply a balance or a pair of scales, like those in greengrocers' shops. Then from meaning a balance or pair of scales, it came to mean what was weighed in the balance. Now money in ancient times was not metal cut up and melted into coins, but

metal in the bar or uncoined form, which was weighed in scales. So it was that a scale-full of silver came to be called a "talent" of silver. Then the word came to be applied to mental endowments, which were more precious than scales-full of gold and silver. In the ordinary way we only apply the word "talented" to very great men—men who have many gifts—five talents. But every one has some gift—some faculty which is in him stronger than others. Everyone is talented. The same is true of "ability." In ordinary life the word "able" and "ability" are applied to men above the average in mental power. When we say X is a "man of ability," or Z is "an able man," we mean a man able to do more than most men can. Properly speaking, however, a man who is able to do anything—to break stones, to write his name, to dig a garden—is an able man. Thus we speak of an able seaman and of an able-bodied man. Everyone has some ability—everyone has some talent. So that this parable applies to all.

EXPLANATORY.—V. 14. "His own servants"—*slaves*. Slaves in ancient times were often skilled artisans, merchants, and even members of learned professions. They were permitted to exercise their calling on paying some yearly tax to their master. Often had money committed to them with which to trade.

V. 15.—A talent of silver among the Greeks would be worth about £243 15s. of our money. Five talents would be £1218 15s., two talents, £487 10s.

V. 18.—"*Digged in the earth.*" Money was often hidden in the earth as likely place safe from robbers.

V. 19.—"*Reckoneth*"—called them to give account.

V. 21.—"*Joy of thy Lord*"—the reference is to the festival with which the master's return was celebrated. The faithful servant was to be admitted to the feast and to sit down at the table with his lord.

V. 24.—"*Came and said.*" This servant anticipates his lord's condemnation. "Qui s'excuse s'accuse." *Strawed*—scattered—sown.

V. 27.—"*Exchangers*"—bankers. "*Usury*"—interest.

LESSONS.—1. Gifts are given for use. 2. Use brings increase. 3. Disuse cannot keep what it has. Not to use the limbs is to lose the power of using them. Not to use the mind is to stint and starve it.

Everyone has some brains, some strength, some power for service, some gift or faculty. You have not all the same kind or amount of brains—not all the same gifts and powers—but all have some. Now (1) A faculty or gift is for use. It is not your own to do what you like with. It is a trust. You are stewards—trustees—and some day will have to give account. *Life* is a talent—a gift—a stewardship. So is property, or knowledge, or health, or brain power, or artistic power, or poetic power, or scientific power. And they are for *use*. What a fearful waste is a steam engine that is *not used*. A tool, a book, a musical instrument, are all for use. Things, gifts, faculties, are ours to make us serviceable and helpful. Then (2) use brings increase Gifts don't grow of themselves, they grow by using. We say money grows. But if we put it into the ground like a seed, will it sprout where it is sown? Do you expect to get a money-tree out of the ground? We must use money in trade to make it grow. Nothing grows of itself, except weeds. If you had never used your legs and arms, they would never have grown any bigger, they would have shrivelled up and wasted away. The way to get more brains is to use what brains you have. The way to get a more loving heart is to love with the heart you have. (3) Gifts unused decay. To have and not to use, how sad, foolish, and wicked. Its punishment is that our gift unused, rusts, shrivels up, and is *lost*.

There are many other lessons to be drawn from this parable. Repeat the hymn—"God entrusts to all, Talents few or many," &c. Illustrate the lesson by (1) nine lines from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Act 1, Scene 1, beginning—

"Heaven does with us as we with torches;"

and (2) by the following Eastern parable, given by *Trench*:—

There went a man from home, and to his neighbour's twain
He gave, to keep for him, two sacks of golden grain,
Deep in his cellar one the precious charge concealed;
Forth the other went and strewed it in his field.
The man returns at last—asks of the first his sack;
"Here, take it; 'tis the same; thou hast it safely back."
Unharmed it shows without; but when he would explore
His sack's recesses, corn there finds he now no more;
One half of all therein proves rotten and decayed,
Upon the other half have worm and mildew preyed.
The putrid heap to him in ire he doth return;
Then of the other asks, "Where is my sack of corn?"
Who answered, "Come with me, behold how it has sped,"—
And took and shewed him fields with waving harvests spread.
Then cheerfully the man laughed out and cried, "This one
Had insight to make up for the other that had none;
The letter *he* observed, but *thou* the precept's sense:
And thus to thee and me shall profit grow from hence;
In harvest thou shalt fill two sacks of corn for me;
The residue of right remains in full for thee."

Children's Games for Wet Days.

The *Parents' Review* has an important article on the holidays of children. The writer's hints on how to spend a wet or stormy holiday are especially valuable. If children are left to themselves, they will usually devise delightful modes of spending the time. What they really need is some room in which they may be allowed to do as they please, and where there is no furniture that needs taking care of. It is a wise policy to give up the best upstairs room in the house for a playroom for the children. If this is impossible, then try to give your children an empty attic to play in, and if they cannot have that, then they must be allowed, if they are to enjoy their holidays at all and not to become a nuisance to everybody in the house, to play as they like in

one of the bedrooms. Better that than allowing them to romp in the kitchen with the servants, a practice that I have found to be allowed in houses where there seems to be ample space to provide a playroom for the children.

The getting up of small entertainments, tableaux, etc., will often form pleasant occupation for a family of children for days together, and they will exercise a suprising amount of ingenuity over these, even when quite little. If mothers would provide a large chest of old clothes for their children's use, they would find it a great resource in holiday time. Our children have such a chest of what they call "their dressing-up clothes," and it has provided occupation for many a wet holiday. Then there is the additional delight in the children's hour before bedtime, of giving the results of their igenuity in a little performance before father and mother.

There are many other games which will pass the time happily on a wet afternoon. May we suggest that mothers should encourage nursery cooking more frequently than is usual in most families. Experience shows that there is nothing children more delight in than cookery. A newspaper lately offered prizes for the best recipes for children's cookery, and was simply overwhelmed with letters from girls *and boys*, telling of dishes they could make themselves. "One little maid of my acquaintance spent the whole of a holiday in the nursery, cooking, and having been forbidden for fear of accidents to use the spirit lamp belonging to her little stove, warmed it at great expenditure of night-lights and candle ends, but not Whymper when he attained the summit of the Matterhorn, or Columbus when he discovered America, could have felt more keenly the joy of a great purpose achieved than that child did, when, in the evening, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes she produced, as the result of her day's labour, a few doughy cakes and a diminutive pot of gooseberry jam."

Do not be troubled because you have not great virtues. God made a million spears of grass, where He made one tree. The earth is fringed and carpeted, not with forests, but with grasses. Only have enough of little virtues and common fidelities, and you need not mourn because you are not a hero nor a saint.

Rev. L. G. Harris Crook.

We deeply regret to record the death, at the early age of thirty-two, of the Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, our minister at Snow Hill, Wolverhampton. He had been in ill-health for some time, and arrangements had been made by brother ministers to release him from pulpit duty for three months, by which time it was hoped his strength would be restored. This hope has been sadly disappointed; he passed away on the 6th ult. at Clevedon, where he had been taken for warmer air.

Mr. Crook came of an old Unitarian family, his father being Mr. Henry Crook, of Bolton, of which town his uncle was a former mayor, and also a Parliamentary representative. His mother Margaret H. Crook, was a daughter of the late well-known minister, the Rev. George Harris, and his name, Leopold George Harris Crook, was an abiding memorial of this distinguished ancestry. He was educated at one of the leading agricultural colleges, and for a few years followed the calling of gentleman farmer. He completed his studies at Owen's College, Manchester, and was for some time associated with the Monton Church, where he officiated as organist. His first pulpit was at Ilkeston, in Derbyshire, where he did good work in the face of many difficulties, and after a pastorate of two years he was appointed in 1892 to the care of the Wolverhampton congregation. Here he pressed forward the project of the erection of a new schoolroom, and owing chiefly to his own and Mrs. Crook's untiring efforts this was accomplished last year, and the school was opened a fortnight before his illness began. A man of quiet demeanour he was nevertheless full of enthusiasm for the work to which he was called, an earnest and devoted worker, and always maintained a high standard of principle, never swerving before obstacles in the path his conscience dictated. His loss will be deeply felt and mourned by his many private friends, and by the congregation on whose behalf he worked so hard. He leaves a widow and three young children.

A meeting of the congregation was held in the schoolroom after evening service on Sunday, February 10th. Mr. H. E. Perry occupied the chair. In speaking of the bereavement which they as a congregation had suffered in the death of their pastor, the Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, the Chairman said that after the beautiful and affecting sermon they had just heard from the Rev. E. W. Lummis bearing on their loss and their duty in the future to carry on the work which their minister had been called to leave, it was only necessary for him to say a very few words. Their

first duty was to pass a resolution of sympathy with Mrs. Crook and the other members of the family. He trusted that the loss the congregation had sustained might be a lesson to them, that the sense of a common sorrow might bind them together in brotherly love. He submitted the following resolution:—"That the members of this congregation have received with sincere regret the intelligence of the death of their minister, the Rev. L. G. Harris Crook. They desire to place on record the respect and regard in which he was held by them, their admiration of his character, his untiring zeal, his unassuming manners, his manly straightforwardness, his integrity, his kindly thoughtfulness, and the devotion of his life to the work he had undertaken. His wife, children, and relatives will feel his loss the most severely, but the members of this congregation also feel that they have lost a friend and leader, and offer to his dear ones their sincere and heartfelt sympathy." This was proposed by Mr. Bowkley and seconded by Mr. Ling, who spoke of the high appreciation in which Mr. Crook's efforts had been held. They had all tried to do their best, but he had done better than his best. It was significant that they were meeting to-night in the building which had been obtained so largely by his efforts. In supporting the resolution, Mr. Ricket wished to add his testimony to the character and work of their late minister; he spoke, too, on behalf of some of the young people for whom he and Mrs. Crook had done so much. The resolution was passed in silence, all standing.

News from the Field.

BANBURY (*Christchurch Chapel, Horse Fair*).—On Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, January 29th and 30th, the annual New Year's parties was held in connection with the Sunday School of the above chapel. On Tuesday evening the scholars went through a programme of recitations, dialogues, songs and music pieces in an excellent manner. Rev. H. Hill (minister) occupied the chair. At the conclusion of the programme, gifts of clothing and useful articles of wearing apparel were given out to the scholars by Mr. and Mrs. Hill. Again, as last year, Edward Cobb, Esq., and Mrs. Cobb, of Lewes, kindly sent an excellent parcel of good clothing for the children. Several members of the congregation and other friends also contributed articles of clothing and money, &c., for the New Year's parties. The young people and friends present heartily joined in thanking those who had remembered them once again, whilst three cheers were given for Mr. and Mrs. Cobb, of Lewes. A successful and pleasant meeting was concluded with singing and the benediction.—On Wednesday evening the scholars had their annual Christmas tea and games and recreation in the schoolroom, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Parents, members of the congregation, and teachers were present, and attended to the creature comforts, &c., of the young people. Altogether two very pleasant and enjoyable meetings were held in connection with the school.

BIRMINGHAM (*Church of the Messiah*).—The annual meeting of the Church of the Messiah took place on Wednesday, February 13th, in the Church, Broad Street, after tea in the schoolroom. Mr. T. H. Russell presided, and among those present were the Revds. L. P. Jacks (minister), Joseph Wood, J. C. Street, and A. Charlesworth, Dr. J. W. Russell, Dr. Simon, and Messrs. W. H. Beale, P. W. Crosskey, E. Danks, T. Danks, J. H. Lloyd, Russell Jolly, B. W. Kenrick, E. H. Lee, L. Hughes, Herbert New, J. T. Osler, T. W. Ryland, J. T. Skirrow, Howard S. Smith, Priestley Smith, T. W. Tate, W. J. B. Tranter, H. Payton, C. Isaacs, J. Kimberley, B. Whitehouse, Corrington, &c.—The Vestry Committee reported that on October 7th the Rev. L. P. Jacks entered upon his ministry. The increased attendance at the services, and the healthy activity of the various institutions connected with the church indicated not only the feeling of relief and pleasure with which the congregation again found themselves with a settled minister at their head, but also their unabated concern for the continued success of the work. A memorial tablet to the late Dr. Crosskey had been placed in the church. The various institutions connected with the church had all continued their useful work during the year. The treasurer's statement showed that while the ordinary and special expenditure for the year had been fully met, an addition of about £100 per annum must be made to the regular income of the church before the finances could be considered to be in a satisfactory condition. The total amount contributed to the congregation during 1894 was £2236 16s. 0½d., as against £2030 10s. 7d. in 1893. On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Payton, the report was adopted.—Mr. Howard S. Smith, in moving a resolution of welcome to the Rev. L. P. Jacks, spoke of the great ability of the new minister, and of the cordial relations which existed between Mr. Jacks and the congregation. The motion was seconded by Mr. B. Whitehouse and cordially adopted.—On the motion of Mr. T. H. Floyd, seconded by Mr. B. W. Kenrick, a vote of thanks was passed to the Vestry Commitee.—Mr. Herbert New was re-elected honorary treasurer. Mr. Russell Jolly was elected warden for the next two years.—After a short discussion on the form of Church service, initiated by the Rev. L. P. Jacks, the social proceedings were resumed. In the upper schoolroom there were some interesting exhibits, and in the lower schoolroom a series of dissolving views of Irish and Scotch scenery was shown. There was also a concert in the congregational room.

BIRMINGHAM (*Small Heath*).—The Rev. E. J. Sale has resigned his ministry of this church. At a meeting of the congregation, held on Sunday evening, February 17, under the presidency of the Rev. Joseph Wood, it was unanimously resolved "That the members of the Small Heath Free Christian Church, while acquiescing with regret in the resignation of Mr. Sale, desire to place on record their gratitude for, and appreciation of, his ser-

vices in the past, and to express their best wishes for his happiness and welfare in the future." A further resolution was passed, pledging the members to stand by the church in its hour of trial and difficulty.

BIRMINGHAM (*Church of the Saviour*).—The Rev. Dr. W. Evans Darby, Secretary of the Peace Society, preached twice on the 27th Jan. On the same day the new co-pastor, the Rev. E. Lummis, addressed the Sunday school children, and distributed the prizes for the past year. At the annual meeting of the Sunday school, held subsequently, under the presidency of the Rev J C. Street, it was decided to affiliate the school to the Midland Sunday School Association.

BIRMINGHAM (*Church of the Saviour*).—The annual meeting was held on Friday, February 15th, Mr. C. B. Partridge in the chair. Mr. W. Johnson read the report which gave a most cheering account of all the institutions connected with the Church, and expressed gratitude to Mr. Street for having cleared away the debt which had so long hampered their work. Regret was expressed that there was a falling off in the finances during the year, and a hope was indulged in that the current year would witness an improvement in this respect. A cordial welcome was offered to the Rev. E. W. Lummis, on his entrance upon the Home Mission work of the Church. The reports of the secretary and treasurer were adopted. A resolution of warm thanks to Mr. Street for his services during the year, and of great sympathy with him in his illness was passed. The committee was elected for the New Year, and addresses were delivered by Mr. Street and Mr. Lummis. The general feeling seemed to be of thankfulness for the past and hope for the future.

LYE.—Three additions have been made to our building fund during the past month, viz:—Mr. Thos. Gladstone, Birmingham, £5; Mr. Geo. W. Brown, London, £1; British and Foreign Unitarian Association, £20. This gives us a total of £230 3s. 6d. There is but little to report otherwise. Owing to the severity and the consequent suspension of building operations, work on week nights has been hindered. On the evening of Sunday, February 10th, the Rev. Jno. Harrison lectured on "Is Christianity played out?" On the 17th, the Rev. I. Wrigley followed with "Where did the Bible come from?" Other lectures will follow.

OLDBURY.—On Sunday afternoon, February 10th, the annual distribution of prizes in connection with the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Class took place, when a large number of books were distributed by the Rev. Edgar Solly Anthony, B.D., of Much Hadham. There was a very large attendance and the rev. gentleman gave an interesting address. After the gift of books the Rev. Henry McKean, C.C., J.P. (pastor), Messrs. Josiah Baker, A. Burgess, and Fred G. Gibson spoke, and a vote of thanks was accorded to the visitor and to the secretary (Mr. Cutler).

OLDBURY (*Guild of the Good Shepherd*).—On Monday, February 11th, the annual meeting of the Oldbury branch of the above Order took place in the Unitarian Meeting House, when amongst those present were the Rev. E. Solly Anthony, B.D. (Provost of the Order), Rev. E. P. Hall (Cradley), Rev. H. McKean, C.C., J.P. (Warden of the Oldbury branch), W. Morgan (Treasurer of the Order), &c.—The proceedings commenced with tea in the schoolroom at 6-30 and was largely attended. An open Guild Meeting was held at 7-15, when seven members were initiated (and on a special evening previous 14) making a total of 21 for the annual meeting. The Guild is progressing in a very satisfactory way in our midst, and doing good work for the school and church; it has been one of the best attended festivals we have had since its inauguration. An address was delivered by the Provost—strengthening the bonds of brotherhood; also by the Rev. E. P. Hall (Cradley) and the Rev. H. McKean who conducted the proceedings. At 8-15 Holy Communion was partaken of in the Meeting House; the officiating ministers being the Rev. E. S. Anthony, B.D., Rev. E. P. Hall (Cradley), and the Rev. H. McKean; when 60 communicants partook. A collection was made at the close for the general and local funds.

STOURBRIDGE.—At the recent School Board election, a majority of representatives was secured by the Nonconformists, and Mr. A. W. Worthington has been elected as chairman.

WHITCHURCH.—The past month has been a busy one at the Church of the Saviour. Dr. Brooke Herford visited us and preached, on a night of keen wind and frost, to an excellent congregation, notwithstanding the cold and a performance of Gaul's "Holy City" in the Parish Church, which was fixed for the same hour weeks after the first announcement of Dr. Herford's visit was publicly made. On the afternoon of his visit, the children's tea party was held, and a right merry time of it they had. After service, Dr. Herford visited the Men's Club, where he spent an hour, and spoke a few words over the billiard tables—words which found an echo in every player's heart. The annual church party and meeting, held a week later, brought together 142 of our adherents, frost and snow-bound roads keeping some others away Tea was served in the club-house, then we read and adopted our accounts, transacted our business and had our yearly address from our minister, who told of many things which gladdened our hearts, and gave us grace for another year's work. Games, music, and dancing followed, and at 10 o'clock one of the three great silver loving cups, won at last year's shooting by Corporal Stevens, a member and trustee of our church, was filled with a warm posset of non-intoxicating drink and passed round A team from the men's club visited Liverpool and played a billiard match with the men of the North End Domestic Mission, who beat us, and right well cared for us. An Oxford visitor, in the person of the Hibbert Professor, the Rev. J. Edwin Odgers, M.C., has also looked in at church and club, whilst visiting our minister. We localise the *Seed Sower* this year, beginning with this number, and feel sure all our readers here will welcome this popular magazine and its "Chronicle" addition.

Midland Christian Union and Provincial Assembly.

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY.

On ASSEMBLY SUNDAY, 10th March, 1895,

Sermons will be Preached and Collections taken at—

	PREACHER.
Alcester	Rev. D. DAVIS.
Birmingham—	
Church of the Messiah (M)	Rev. E. P. HALL.
(E)	Rev. J. HARRISON.
Old Meeting Church (M)	Rev. J. HARRISON.
(E)	Rev. B. K. GRAY.
Newhall Hill Church (M)	Rev. B. K. GRAY.
(E)	Rev. E. P. HALL.
Fazeley Street	Rev. H. HILL.
Hurst Street ... (E)	Rev. J. HOWARD.
Banbury	Rev. P. DEAN.
Coseley	Rev. H. EACHUS.
Cradley	Rev. L. P. JACKS, M.A.
Dudley	Rev. A. W. TIMMIS.

	PREACHER.
Evesham	Rev. J. WOOD.
Kidderminster ...	Rev. G. EYRE EVANS.
Kingswood	Rev. J. HARDING MATTHEWS.
Lye ...	Rev. A. A. CHARLESWORTH.
Oldbury	Rev. H. MCKEAN.
Shrewsbury ...	Rev. E. MYERS, F.G.S.
Stourbridge ...	Rev. A. H. SHELLEY.
Tamworth ... (M)	Rev. J. HOWARD.
(E)	Rev. W. J. CLARKE.
Walsall	Rev. T. PIPE.
West Bromwich,	Rev. E. D. PRIESTLEY EVANS.
Warwick	Rev. J. DALE.
Whitchurch ...	Rev. I. WRIGLEY, B.A.
Wolverhampton ...	Rev. R. DAVIS, B.A.

THE ANNUAL MEETINGS

WILL BE HELD AT

NEWHALL HILL CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM,

On Monday, March 11th.

3-0 p.m. THE ASSEMBLY MEETS.

A Business Meeting will be followed by a Conference on "The New Christianity," introduced by Rev. WALTER LLOYD (Gloucester).

5-45 p.m. TEA.

7-30 p.m. **A Sermon** by Rev. CHARLES HARGROVE, M.A. (Leeds). Subject, "The Reunion of Christendom."